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DISCOURSE

ON THE
LORD'S DAY;

OR
CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

In which the Points of Doctrine on that Subject,
and the correspondent Line of Practise,
are briefly, and distinctly stated.

PUBLISHED IN ADDITION TO
THREE SERMONS,

FOR THE
FESTIVALS AND FASTS
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

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EXOD. xx. 8.

“ Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.”

IN the creation of the world, God having wrought during six days, blessed the seventh day. He distinguished it as the period of his cessation from that work which he accomplished for his own glory, and he appointed a solemn memorial of his rest to be perpetuated by the separation of one day in seven through the several ages of the world.

In process of time God enjoined
the Children of Israel in memory of

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their deliverance from the hand of Pharoah, to observe a seventh day of rest or sabbath, that period being once more fixed, and consecrated to religious ends, after the observation of it had been often interrupted, more especially during the Ægyptian bondage.

Such were the special reasons for the ordinance of the Sabbath, with reference to the several æras of its institution.

The general ground of its utility appears in this, that a provision was thus made for a seasonable respite from the business of the world, and
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a stated opportunity was furnished for the performance of religious offices.

These motives for the observation of the Sabbath bind, in some sense, to all times. The memorial of the creation concerns all men in all ages, and deserves their punctual regard; the deliverance from Ægypt may remind us of our deliverance from the bondage of sin, and therefore this ground remains in substance; and the setting apart a season for the solemn worship and service of God, is manifestly of universal and perpetual obligation.

Let us consider next what new circumstances affect the observation of the Sabbath under the Gospel.

The christian Sabbath differs from the Jewish rest, because that rest was, in some respects, a matter of ceremony, and a shadow of good things to come, representing, as we learn from the Apostle, a cessation from the works of sin*. The time also which is to be hallowed to the purposes of public worship and religion, was changed under the Gospel from the last to the first day of the week, because on that day Christ rose from

* Heb. iv. 10.

the sepulchre. The sacred duties of the Sabbath were, therefore, translated to that season of gladness, which was graced with the distinguished title of the Lord's Day.

The prime objects of devotion and religious duty, to which the Sabbath was originally designed, are much heightened and improved by the memory of Christ's resurrection. Let us state briefly the grounds and traces of this new period as they occur in scripture.

The first day of the week, reckoning from the Jewish Sabbath, but the seventh, if reckoned in succession

to our days of labour, was honoured by Christ's rising from the Grave, by his appearance to Mary Magdalene and the other women, to whom he declared the doctrine of the resurrection * ; after that, by his appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, to whom he preached at large the same truths, breaking bread with them †. On that day he also manifested himself to the disciples assembled at Jerusalem, blessing and instructing them. Again, in the following week, on the same day, he assembled with them, and satisfied St. Thomas, who before had doubted,

* Matt. xxviii. 9. † Luke xxiv. 30.

and

and blessed them *. On the same day, but with an interval of time, at the feast of Pentecost, he sent upon his disciples the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost †. At Troas, St. Paul preached to the disciples, assembled, it is said, expressly on the first day of the week, to break bread ‡. We find that such assemblies were wont to be held at Corinth on this day, the Apostle taking this for granted, and directing the collections to be then made §. He had issued a similar order for the Churches in Galatia ||. Hence this day re-

* John xx. 26. † Acts ii. ‡ Acts xx. 7.

§ 1 Cor. xvi. 2. || 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

ceived

ceived the Title of the Lord's Day : it is so called in express terms by St. John * ; and the Church, in all times, hath retained that venerable name.

Thus, although we meet with no express mention in the Gospel of the removal of the day, the Jews continuing to observe the last, and the Christians, by degrees, beginning to observe the first day of the week, yet the instances already cited prove the practice.

The notice and respect which the Christians paid, during some con-

* Rev. i. 10.

siderable

siderable time, to the Jewish Sabbath, does not at all destroy this evidence, or render the inference that the day of Sabbath was gradually changed, less valid. The Christian Church, for awhile, observed, with similar regard, much of the ceremonial law, which was to vanish by degrees. Nor can it be reasonably urged, that the prime object of the institution, the memorial of the seventh day's rest at the creation, was cancelled by the change. It is not possible, by any calculation, to determine which is truly the seventh day in succession from the creation; nor would such a determination be material: it is sufficient if a seventh day

day be duly separated in memory of that day of rest, which God blessed and sanctified.

These chief particulars may here be summed up concerning the Sabbath: that a certain portion of time was to be separated to the worship of God; this is the moral part of the commandment: that this portion was determined to be one day of rest after six of labour, in memory of God's rest, or ceasing from his work at the creation; this is that part which is positive in the Law: that the Jews, by virtue of a special precept, commemorated their deliverance from bondage by the same ordinance:

ordinance: and that the Christian Church, observing the prime ends of the institution, commemorates also, at the same time, Christ's glorious resurrection.

From these preliminaries we may now turn our attention to the two main things which should characterise the Lord's Day, and distinguish it from all others; and these are, rest and devotion.

The strictness of the Jewish rest was proper and peculiar to the Jews; but the rest which was appropriated from the beginning to the Sabbath, the cessation from ordinary labours
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and pursuits, in memory of the seventh day's rest at the Creation, and in order to the special duties of religious worship, is still required.

It may seem indeed to be more necessary to enforce the observation of the Sabbath as a day of devotion, than of rest. Many who abstain from common labours, require to be reminded, that the respite which is furnished from the cares and pursuits of the world, is intended to promote the interests of religion, and to supply a season when the great truths of the life to come may be more nearly viewed. To keep a day of rest, and not to hallow it, would be to hold a
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Sabbath altogether slothful, and irrational. Let us then mark distinctly the peculiar duties and expressions of the mind and conduct, by which these reserves of time should be devoted to religious purposes, and consecrated to the name and memory of our Redeemer.

The celebration of the Lord's day must be peculiar in a double respect; first, as it is an holy Sabbath, and then, as it is a perpetual Festival. We neither concur in practise or opinion with those who celebrate it only as a Sabbath, with a strictness almost judaical, refusing to acknowledge it as the Lord's day, or to call

it by that name: nor do we join with those who celebrate it only as a Festival, in honor of Christ's resurrection, departing from the peculiar duties, and rejecting the title of the Sabbath. We celebrate it in virtue of the fourth precept of the Decalogue as an holy Sabbath; and in conformity to the practice and example of the first age of Christianity, we celebrate it as the Lord's day. As a day of Sabbath, it admits not the ordinary engagements of business or amusement. As a day of Festival, all exercises of religious sorrow and humiliation are excluded from it. Serenity and gladness of mind, public worship, private devotion, prayer, instruct-

instruction, every charitable work, and every friendly office, whatever may conduce to acquire, or to dispense the knowledge of divine truth, whatever tends to cherish habits of piety and heedfulness, are eminently proper to the day.—And that cheerful leisure and refreshment, which prudent hospitality encourages, which may lead to useful ends, and by which social amity is strengthened, are not to be reprov'd. We must, however, in these measures of our conduct, be particularly cautious that nothing be allowed which is plainly foreign to the tenor and duties of the day; which would engage the passions,

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without profiting the heart, and in which no sentiment of piety can possibly have place.

If the minds of many cannot be kept up attentively to serious objects, through this short portion of their lives, it will not follow that they may therefore be set at liberty to engage in any common occupation or diversion. If they decline doing what is fit and profitable when the season offers, they must not make their own neglects, and the vacancy occasioned by them, a reason for recurring to employments which would entirely banish every token of reverence

rence and recollection. We do not contend for such a prohibition as bound the Jews, and brought death upon the man who gathered sticks upon the Sabbath *; but we maintain, that the offence against the general design and tenor of a day, which is separated to religious purposes, is manifest in the case of those who pursue the calls of business or diversion. They violate the laws of charity by giving scandal and disturbance to the well-disposed. They deprive many by unnecessary service and attendance, inseparable from

* Numb. xv. 36.

such irregularities, of that rest to which they are entitled, and of that opportunity for devotion which God hath appointed for them. The loose and idle are also encouraged in their folly by a dissolute example. We must then conclude, that our ordinary business and amusements, which at all times should be kept in due subjection to the great interests of our final hope, should be prevented altogether from encroaching on the season which is allotted for promoting that hope in our hearts. Will it not appear to be a strange perverseness, and an obstinate refusal of the kindness of God, to translate
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the drudgeries of other days, to that
 day which has the special privilege of
 peace and leisure? Will it not indicate
 a great degeneracy of spirit to persist
 in bringing the witness of our fall,
 and the tokens of its punishment,
 labour and care, into that interval
 which should restore man to his
 prime dignity, which should furnish
 some character of his first freedom
 and enjoyment of things sublunary.
 Nor can the use of customary amuse-
 ments and diversions, though less
 mean and sordid than laborious works,
 be vindicated from the same charge
 of breach of duty, and of departure
 from the best exercise of rational
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enjoyment. With some men, mere amusement forms the business of life, and thus their daily care is never interrupted if it be extended to these hours. Such employments of pleasure and fancy tend, indeed, even more than the mere labour of the hand, to absorb attention : the reason for restraining them, from time to time, becomes therefore more pressing, in order that the stream of vanity may not enlarge itself for ever, and drown in oblivion every wise and profitable reflection. To these considerations we may add the necessity for establishing clearly and decisively the boundaries of decorum and propriety ;

priety ; since, if some use a little licence, others will take more, and will plead example for their wantonness.

It remains to frame a few reflections in conclusion.

So various are the occupations which our present state supplies ; so much of our time is employed in making provision for the wants, or in procuring the comforts and conveniencies of life, that it will suggest matter of concern to the considerate, when the hours so spent shall be compared with the small portion of our lives which is devoted to the
worship

worship of God, to the study of his laws, and to the contemplation of such objects as form the chief ends of our being. Since, then, by the goodness of God, and by his indulgence to our wants, the thoughts and actions of men are enlarged to the various engagements of this scene in its business and pursuits, the obligation becomes more cogent for observing, with zeal and heedfulness, the stated calls which summon our attention to sublimer things, and solicit our regard to more important interests.

The frequent celebration of the praises of God, furnishes a direct
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acknowledgment of the power and goodness of the Creator; it holds out a continual profession that we are his servants, and that we love his service; it tends to preserve men from infidelity, and from a gross addiction to the world, together with their attendant mischiefs, error and vice. Nor need we hesitate to add, that such exercises of the reasonable faculties, whilst they rank among the best oblations which we can offer, tend to the honour and glory of God.

Let us then encourage the persuasion, that the regular and repeated tenders of our dutiful and sincere

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regard will sanctify the whole course and substance of our lives, and will advance us perpetually toward the land of peace and joy. Thus as we pass through the several changes appointed by Providence, we may commend to God the successive measures of our service: hallowing the day which bears the name of our Redeemer, taking an open share in all its duties, transferring the exercise of those duties to our hours of privacy, and manifesting throughout this portion of our lives a demeanour uniformly heedful and consistent. An assurance will arise upon a careful and sincere performance of this part of our duty, that God, who

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for good purposes has so distinguished
and appropriated these returns of
time, fixing his sacred image upon
them, and drawing them as a tribute
to himself, will bless the right use and
application of them with peculiar
favour.

F I N I S.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Secretary of the Navy, dated 18th March 1899. The letter is signed by William McKinley and is addressed to John D. Long. The letter is a copy of a letter that was sent to the Secretary of the Navy by the President. The letter is a copy of a letter that was sent to the Secretary of the Navy by the President.

